"Names like Trumpets"
and Other Poems

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From the Author's sisters
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to Henry W. Cook. Esquire.
late 5th Royal Irish Rifles
in Memory of heroic fortitude.

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NAMES LIKE TRUMPETS

("Places . . . with names like trumpets." London "Observer," August 5, 1917.)

Martinpuich and Pozieres,
Courcelette and Guillemont,
Mouquet Farm, Le Sars and Flers,
Contalmaison, Destremont.

Mellow as orchard beneath Autumn's caresses,
Sweet to the tongue as fruit ripe to the wooing
Were our names in the dead rose-red days ere war's stresses
Shocked us from dreams to our piteous undoing.

Souchez River, Carency,
Angres, the Bois d'Hirondelle,
Lievin and Givenchy,
Vimy's height and Vimy's hell.

Mellow as anthems our belfries once chanted,
Sweet to the ear as a trumpet's far crying,
Shall our names be for all time, though, history-haunted,
Our streets and our orchards lie outraged and dying.

Honour's gentle accolade
Falls on every knightly name.
Hear the faint fanfaronade,
Silver-sweet, each style proclaim.

(Before Lens, August 15th, 1917.)

GILD NO GOLDEN MEMORY

("A movement has been inaugurated to erect a monument at Rheims in commemoration of the Cathedral of Notre Dame." *Vide* Daily Press, September, 1914.)

I pray you let me wend—
Stay not my spirit with your outstretched hands,
Loving, but over-fond; no fumbling bands
May staunch this ebbing tide;
Alone save for my pride
And God—leave me with Him to make the end.

These fifteen reeking hours,
With those my fifteen storied centuries
Gorged and bloated, squat beneath your eyes,
Which yesterday in vain
Sought to embrace my fane
In one long rapture, crying, "This is ours!"

Of Our Liege Lady's grace
My kings have craved their crowning at my gift.
O untoward fate! that I, with scanty shrift,
Must don this withering crown
Of death, unknightly thrown
By yon base churl, who fouls a king's high place!

The faggot and the flame—
Whence soared to Heaven the soul of La Pucelle,
She whom my cloistered spirit loved so well,
And in due season saw
France to her Lord restore—
Were sister spawn of Hell to this my shame.

Where rest my martyr-saints;
Where my apostles and my virgins; all
That gentle fellowship of niche and stall
And gilded canopy?
In fuller panoply
Find they a sanctuary from man-made straints?

For now that fair demesne
Of vaulted choir, groined roof and pinnacle,
Crocket and cusp, stone steeped in miracle,
Where they were wont to cry,
Silent, unceasingly,
The Master-Builder's praise, is riven in twain.

So cover I my face
That men spoke well of; yield my dust to dust,
Ashes to live ashes, earth to red earth. Yet must
My soul unsleeping brood
About the shadowy Rood,
Which eyes of pure and good report may trace.

But weld no chain for me;
No harsh "Hic Jacet" raise, no cenotaph
Of weary bronze. Memory my epitaph
Of Loveliness sublime
Defying Death and Time
Shall blazon on men's hearts eternally.

September 29th, 1914.
Cowichan Station,
Vancouver Island, B. C.

TO A BELGIAN BOY

So they've broken your quaint little home in bits;
Trampled your checker-board garden to mud;
Where your tiny ...air stood, now a big gun sits,
But it sneers at porridge, and bellows for blood.
Smashed is the fine blue plate of Delft
That used to rest on the ingle-shelf;
And the old copper coffee-pot shines no more
In the glint of the sun through the open door.

When the "bon papa" hurried away that day,
Dropping his blouse and his old "sabots,"
You straight picked them up in your manly way,
As you picked up his jobs, and all "ces choses"
Which you knew he'd to drop for other work
Which wouldn't wait, so you didn't shirk,
But flung out your chest as a good boy should,
And milked the old cow and chopped the wood.

And, now, you're adrift on the long high-way
Which leads where the good God only can tell;
But you trudge, strong and sturdy, as a brave boy may,
With a scornful "pouf" for the hosts of Hell!
Your father may lie on some hideous field,
But your mother is here, and needs a shield;
And the little sister, cuddled in her tired arms,
Wants a big brother handy in case of alarms.

Salut! you plucky little Belgian boy,
We all want to give you a lift on the way
Back to your chores and your mended toy,
Back to your healed old home some day;
To your jolly old saints, Michel and Pierre,
Who will smile a welcome, while they drop a tear
For a child made man in a school too sure,
Kneeling once more at the old "*prie-dieu.*"

October, 1914,
Cowichan Station,
Vancouver Island, B. C.

ICH DIEN

(N.B.—The Prince of Wales left for the front on November 16, 1914.)

This high prerogative of my estate,
Rusting too long in dalliance of name,
Now clamant chafes for utterance in deed.
The burden of the future, aureate, dim,
In heaviest thought as yet galls not my back,
Scarce loosed from boyhood's little, laughing cares;
My hand frets not for orb; my head for crown;
No bannered dreams make pageant of my blood.
Only I seek to serve:
As that Arthurian boy at manhood's brim
Who sought man-service in the press of men:
To draw this maiden sword for Right and Faith;
To sheathe it only at the honour's sate
Of our dear England, whom through life till death
I serve.

November, 1914,
Cowichan Station,
Vancouver Island, B. C.

"THE PASSING OF "BOBS BAHADUR"

November 15, 1914.

(Note.—There were many among the admirers of the great soldier who thought that a tomb more worthy of, or at least more suitable to Lord Roberts and his work, than one in St. Paul's or even Westminster Abbey should have been cut for him in the fastnesses of the Northwest Frontier, where he might keep watch and ward in the spirit forever.—R.S.-W.)

Hush! a Sahib goes by!
. . . . . .
From Dover cliffs to far Cashmir
Rings the challenge, "Who goes there?"
Thrilling slumbering echoes round the path by which you go;
From Punjab plain to Calais pier
The echoes leap from days that were,
Fling the answer, bugle clear:
"Friend—who loved a foe!"
Rung-ho!

Bahadur, rung-ho!
Rajah, nawab, zemindar,
Maharaj and mehetah
Lace with arched and lambent swords the path by which you go.
From Rangoon up to Kandahar,
By palace stilled and hushed bazaar,
Your guard of honour flashes far,
For India loved you so.

Rung-ho!
Gurkha, Sikh and Mahratha,
Sib 'neath battle's sanguined star,
In right of sworn blood-brothers, flank the path by which you go;
Ressaldar and havildar,
Subadar and jemadar,
Each a proven scimitar
Tempered to the foe.

Teeming wards of Hindustan,
Myriad hordes Mahometan
Floor with flame of silken stuffs the path by which you go;
By Bengal and Beluchistan,
By Bolan Pass and Badakshan,
An empire's manhood hails a man—
"Bahadur, rung-ho!"

Cities glowing heavenward,
Faint with history's spikenard,
Kindle jewelled lamps to light the path by which you go.
Proud Cawnpore, your cradle's ward;
Delhi, darling to your sword,
In magic gold your memory guard
With sombre-dreamed Lucknow.

Afghan pass and dune of Scinde,
Deccan wold and plain of Hind,
Lift their fierce lament about the path by which you go.
Himalaya stays the wind
And, mocking, bids it seek and find
One other of your hero-kind
In its wide to-and-fro.

Bahadur, rung-ho!
Hastings, Outram, Nicholson,
With you in your tradition one,
Salute you silently along the path by which you go
To where you 'waits your soldier son,
His hand upon a couchant gun.
. . . . . .
Then India turns her from the sun,
For you loved India so.

November 19, 1914,
Cowichan Station,
Vancouver Island, B.C.

THE SISTERS

"What of the day, O Picardie?
Cry us how goes the day;
I have sent my children from sanctuary
To keep the tryst of the blood for me,
My fee of kinship pay.
Do the lilies, our Mother's lilies pale,
Hold high their heads in the gloom and gale?
Are they yet unstained in their beauty frail?
Sister, how goes the day?"

"Rest tranquil, sister Normandie;
The day goes well for France.
Your sons are one with the sons of me,
Pledged in blood and devoirie
To my deliverance.
But the lilies, our Mother's lilies pale,
Flaunt gules of pride on their argent mail.
Yet never in gracious beauty fail,
So the day goes well for France."

"Do you ride alone, dear Picardie?
Strike alone and lonely stand?"
"Nay, fear not, sister Normandie,
Our Cousin of England rides with me,
Rides at my bridle hand.
And my lilies pale and his roses gay
Kindle the northern marches gray,
Where a wounded Lion holds the way
Hard by the North Sea strand."

France, 1916.

REST CAMP

I know a road that winds all morn
About a hanging wood;
A road so still, a wood so green
That all the world seems good.
And stark against the whispering trees
Lo! a living Rood.

Below the road a city lies,
Its countless highways warm
With russet-brown of humming tents;
A place of hasty balm
For those who sojourn for a space
Held from the questing storm.

And all about are flowers abloom
And lawns dressed orderly,
So the heart beats once to a quicker step—
The march of memory;
And the oriflamme of white steel dulls
To a pale phantasy.

A phantasy of faces strange,
A shifting, drifting train;
A phantasy of friends who come
And friends who go again,
And, passing, pass in God's ripe time
Each to his greater gain.

For some of us are going on
And some are coming back,
As moves the shuttle to and fro
Within the battle-wrack,
And those must fill the places
Which these have left in lack.

And up beyond the screening trees,
Unseen but by the sun,
Men play all day a grimmer game
Than any save the one.
And oft o' nights the phantom flare
Unmasks the muzzled gun.

Men play all day the mimic game,
    Learning, the while they play,
To fit them for the greater game,
    A role in the master-play.
We call it "The Great Adventure."
    God give me my place and day!

Where lurks a way within the wood
    Steep down we march at even,
And the dust of our going rises up
    Like the dust of gold to Heaven,
Washed in the streams of startled light
    Where sun and gloom have striven.

While through the dusk a chateau grey
    Blinks a sleepy eye,
As if to ask what echoings
    Disturb its seigneurie,
Then sinks again to trooping dreams
    Of a gone century.

Somewhere in France,
    September 14th, 1916.

LETTERS FROM HOME

You say such nice things in your letters, you dear people who
    write from Home,
Had we time we'd be getting swelled-headed over here on the
    silly old Somme.
We look and long for a letter and say bad words when there's
    none,
While the A.P.O. earns our best blessing if it only chucks out
    the one.
Yes, we look and we long for your [illegible]ers—but somehow, you
    know, it's queer—
But the delight they give is a mixed [illegible]e, the joy they give is
    too dear.
For we're men while we're fooling out here, dears, if we never
    were men before,
And men must be men all the time, dears, when they're fooling
    about with war.

And perhaps we resent it a little that you add to our daily "fatigue"—
Or is it the ration candle and the dug-out draught are in league
To make such a job of the reading of these simple letters from you—
To make them blurry and smudgy—to make us just a bit blue?
Yet I'd swear there's something else in it—I'd hate to ask any chap,
But I bet if I yelled "Cry-Baby!" there's some one would collar the cap!

Yes, they're simple enough, your letters, yet they say the deuce of a lot,
And we smother that frog-in-the-throat by making the tongue say "Rot!"
You see, we're just doing our job, dears—don't make it the harder to do
By saying such nice things about us in the letters that come from you.
We're just doing our silly old job here—a giddy old daily round
Of fatigue and patrol and etceteras such as "getting to know your ground;"

With just now and then a spasm—you might almost call it a thrill—
Which takes us out of the common-or-garden grind of the mill,
And makes us one with the star-shell—disembodied, radiant, clean,
Till we come back to earth like a dud, with a prayer that we haven't been seen
By some fool who's just as foolish as ourselves in his "crowded hour,"
And just as wise as we are when it's the other man's turn to "tower."

So don't make us one of the heroes, the johnnies the sages sing—
Why! all of us love our fooling and the chance to have our fling,
To play at this glorified "footer," to get just the fun we need—
Still—a letter each week, if you can, dears—never mind if they're hard to read!

10th Canadian Machine Gun Co.,
B.E.F., France, 1917.

THE RUNNERS OF THE SOMME

They didn't pull off any grand-stand play;
They seldom did much in the gallery way;
They were generally dirty and sometimes shaved,
But never the flag of their country waved,
Because they weren't just built that way.
There wasn't much that they had to say,
Unless it was on the subject of pay,
Which amounted to quite a franc a day—
Not enough, you'll admit, to marry on—
But they packed in their pouch
When out on a mooch
What's better han any brand of "hootch"—
The motto, or badge, or what you please,
Which in army circles is quite the "wheeze"—
The thing we call "Carry on!"

They'd grouch as every good soldier should,
But they treated their job as if sawing wood.
They took their turn as they took their rum,
Without blast of bugle or tuck of drum.
They knew, each hour, what they had to face,
But it never struck them to slacken pace,
Though "three by night and three by day"
Must read the toll of their urgent way,
Which often looked good to tarry on,
Because of the mud,
Or a neighbourly dud,
Or a noise not a little bit like a dud.
They'd light up another weird issue fag,
A "'Alf a Mo'" c. "Regent" or "Flag"—
And cheerfully Carry on!"

They'd give the foot-slogger their simple praise,
With no meed for their own "laborious days."
They guessed that the heroes at the gun
Thought small potatoes of those who "run."
But some Persons saw and made a note,
And when they had time sat down and wrote
In terms that astounded the blushing runner—
Not to mention the past-pluperfect gunner—
On the subject of how to "carry on,"
And took as a model
The ceaseless toddle—
In mud-time ludicrously like a waddle—
That's now the fashion wherever you go
Because the *brass hats* have made it so—
We call it the "Carry on!"

AUTUMN AFTERNOON IN ARTOIS

On an Autumn afternoon—
Dear September still was smiling—
I, an idle hour beguiling,
Watched a weary land aswoon
In a brief surcease from pain;
Hardly might I mark the stain
Flung by battle's hand defiling;
Distant hung the dull reviling
Of the blackened lips of Cain,
Ere, beneath the small, pale moon,
Hell, refreshed, gave tongue again.

On that Autumn afternoon—
Sweet September all aswoon—
Seemed this land a gentle place,
As the Lotus Land in grace;
Hollowed softly to the eye
In a shallow pleasauncie;
A vast but gracious bowl of green
Rimmed full round with deeper sheen
Of copse and forest to the sky
That leaned to kiss it sleepily.
A fragrant bowl, a pot-pourri,
It seemed that afternoon to me,
A very gem of artistry.
A bowl of dainty porcelain ware
It lay around me, lying there
Beneath its echoing further rim;
Its colours were a little dim
As must be beauty seen through tears
Or beauty chastened by the years;
And all its scents and all its sounds
Were muted, as when one with wounds
Lies in a room dressed soberly
In lavender and dimity.
But scents there were and sounds to hear:

The breath of flower that flouted fear,
The voice of tiny, humble bird—
A choir of these just now I heard—
Who shamed me from the painted roof
Of this my dream-land; quaint reproof
From one who soared, remote, aloof
From fear's thrice-harried strife with fear
That man's vainglory thinks must tear
All glad Creation's weft and woof.

Its colours were in minor key—
The colours of my pot-pourri—
Or so, perhaps, it seemed to me,
Who knew my lovely flower-bowl lay
In jeopardy from day to day,
And had, in sooth, felt shock on shock
That yet its beauty made a mock
By adding pride to beauty's store
And touching every crack and flaw
With glory's whitely flaming brush.
Howbeit, that day there drowsed a hush
That clothed each moment with an awe
Of things of guessing; and the more
In mellowness of pigmentry,
In still but lucent dignity
Glowed my pot-pourri.

Ordered copse and forest dim,
Fluted all the shallow rim
In darkest green that sometimes crept,
While restless-dreamed cloud-shadows slept,
To where the whole wide floor was swept
By green in all its hundred moods;
By green of meadows, green of woods;
By green a-sigh in broken pride
For leafy way, for forest ride
That loitered, ere the old world died,
Soft-footed, shy, and fancy-free,
Coy lists for woodland amourie;
By green whose swelling bosom fed
Ten little villages with bread;
By green of richest mantling, flecked
With russet kine and flocks who recked
Nought but the distant meads that becked
To fatter fare from day to day;
By green a-gilt for honeyed hay.

And here and there in pattern bold
The great highways, now grey and cold,
Sprang up or couched, as, fold on fold,
All the champaign before me rolled.
The great highways with trumpet names
That held in fee of riband-hold
Cities whose storied deeds are flames
To fire a world grown old.
The white high-road on market-day,
Ere dropt the sun his level ray,
When the world was all a-sing
And the sturdy metalling
Set each sober hoof a-ring;
And the sentry poplars dressed
Their shadows swart towards the West,
But shook them in the morning breeze
To tell they only jested, lest
The children in their high-day best
Should doubt the friendly trees.
The white high-road from day to day
That bound each little village gay
To neighbour village, rosy red
In warm-tiled cote and wide-flung stead
Whose timbers took the season's tone,
Whose years had washed the mother-stone
With russet, orange, green and brown,
Whose shadows never seemed to frown
But held the sunshine's memory
In golden mote-dust, dancingly.

Orchard, garden, pleasaunce there
Offered gifts of fragrance rare,
Offered gifts to every sense,
"Gold and myrrh and frankincense."
And all about this homeland lay
The homely breath of "every day,"
The kindly touch of common-place
Lifted by God to near His face.

So, that Autumn afternoon,
When September still seemed smiling,
I forgot the foul defiling
Of a trinity of years,
And, with imagery beguiling
Place and hour from ambushed fears,
Held a moment in my hand

As a gem that haunted land
Ere, shocked rudely from her swoon,
Shivering, crept abroad the moon.
But now the sun in kindness shone
This gem of craftsmanship upon
And let his rainbow fingers lie
Upon my porcelain pot-pourri;
With master brush and pencil made
Its bowl anew in shifting jade,
And lit the patterned tracery
Of village, hamlet, cote and byre
To ruddy, pulsing flattery
That shamed the thought that they must die
And be as trampled one with mire.
The bleaching flaws and fissures even,
White as white bones of warm flesh riven,
A shroud of cleaner kind were given,
Enamel, or of ivory,
And shyly riveted anew
By rosemary here, and there by rue.

Nearby a shrinking, breathless plot
Smiled for an hour, a beauty-spot
Fluted with pearly, cruciform
Emblazonings.
There, ensanct from storm,
'Mid but not of the embattled throng
Astride their dreams, sleep still and long
A weary score whose task among
Us ended soon.
And ruby-red the poppy flew
Its ensign clear, and sapphire-blue
The cornflower jeweled the green, and sweet
Was everywhere the marguerite.

Small, and afraid, anon the moon
Her candle held, dim and awry,
To night and hell and devilry.
And then once more it seemed to me
That chill and wan, in death aswoon
And shattered, lay my pot-pourri.

September 9th, 1917.

A SCRAP OF ALTAR-CLOTH

(Found in the famous Basilique of "The Leaning Virgin and Child" at Albert.)

A few tattered inches of velvet,
A fragment of filth, if you please,
But I'd wear such a gage in my helmet
Were I a Plantagenet or Guise,
And strike for the grime and the glory that gem it
As for Cross and the Fleur de Lys.

Dingy and tarnished, its sable
In the foul sable shadows had lain
Of the outrage that once was the Table
In a desolate, desecrate fane,
While Hell's Pentecost raised its impious Babel
'Gainst the shrine of our Lady of Pain.

Lambent gold yet flickered the runing
That told how Christ His Peace
Shall prevail despite Sword and its schooling:—
And slily the spilled battle-lees
From the goblet that brimmed when the year was at nooning
Whispered yet at the walls of Pys.

And ever the Queen of Heaven
Leaned low, ineffably meek,
O'er her city, plundered and riven,
From her painted basilique;
And ever swept upward the souls unshriven,
And were shrived by a Baby weak.

And Our Lady looked out on the city,
And Our Lady looked out o'er the plain;
And her eyes were as stars for pity,
And her eyes were as pools for pain;—
But the Babe at her breast smiled down on the city,
And pledged the promise again.

Then the pledge winged over the torment,
And out through the rain and gloam,
And down the road as a portent—
The road that is called Bapaume—
And its pinions fluttered the murk a moment,
And whispered to us of Home.

Humbly we trespass the Splendour—
How long, O little Lord,
Shall Earth red tribute render
To the red, usurping Sword?
By the Queen of all mothers, O Baby tender,
Make manifest THY Word!

Courcelette Sunken Road, France.

A LITANY OF LITTLE THINGS

Only they who walked with us
A tempestuous trinity
Of years that God made luminous
In Heaven's heraldry,
Know why one sings of the simple things
A grateful litany.

We had our fill of the big things when,
Their feet in the muddy ways
But their eyes sky-clean of vision, men
Challenged the furnace rays
Of Honour's sun ere the sands were run
In the glass of the Wonderful Days

Now we dream of where the pretty things are,
Loving of colour and form,
In a land of houses and children, far
From the scream of the dying storm;
And none shall rail if we follow our Grail
Amid things that are clean and warm.

A rose-red damask curtain hung
At the cosy hush of day;
A fairy khalif's carpet flung
By a lantern's foolish ray
Through the rainbow stain of a window-pane
On a cobbled city-way;

A bit of brass that was dead, but glows
On a cottage mantel-board;
Buried four years and more. Who knows
How the panting housewife's hoard
Of homely things found flustered wings
In the breath of the nearing sword?

A plate that was thumbed at old Tournai
In a forgotten pottery;
A film of cobweb lace that may
Have woven its Odyssey
From a little nun in the cloistered sun
Down a still canal to me;

A cup of crystal; a cross of gold;
A Christus of ivory,
The Face, in the reverent centuries' mould,
Redeemed of its agony;
Archangels four in azure and or
On a jewelled blazonry;

A gilded cusp on the house of a king
Throned in a sun-lit square;
An oaken balustrade a-wing
Up a stately oaken stair;
A buttress caught in a dream and wrought
In wedded stone and air!

These are the things for which we seek
And give thanks on a velvet stool,
While the eyes of a Virgin Mother meek
Trouble the golden pool
Where the candles blaze through the incense haze,
To the glory of Sainte Gudule.

Headquarters-in-the-Field
C.E.F., 1918.